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Acquisition Research Program

Acquisition Research Program Need to Know Newsletter

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2021-03-26

## NPS Need to Know Newsletter Acquisition Research Program, 2021-03-26

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# NEED TO KNOW

March 26, 2021

Issue 48

This week sees a number of articles on the Space Force, as the new service continues to take shape. Our lead story suggests that Space Force acquisition has a new lead, at least for now. Two articles touch on education for current and future Space Force guardians – the first class of JROTC students and a suggestion for a Space Force War College. The integrity of the supply chain continues to be a hot topic, with commentary from journalists and analysis from GAO. And this week we're enjoying the latest hit in a surprising new genre—music about alternative acquisition authorities. Who knew you could create a jingle around OTAs?

## **This Week's Top Story**

### **Rogers feeling optimistic about Space Force procurement efforts**

Sandra Erwin, Space News

Rep. Mike Rogers (R-Ala.), the top Republican on the House Armed Services Committee, said the Space Force is making progress in the organization of its acquisition office and expects to see new proposals to accelerate acquisition programs.

Rogers told reporters March 22 that Chief of Space Operations Gen. John Raymond brought in veteran space procurement expert Ellen Pawlikowski to help set up the service's acquisition organization. Congress directed the Department of the Air Force to stand up a separate civilian acquisition executive for space by 2022.

Pawlikowski is a retired four-star general who ran the Air Force Materiel Command, the Space and Missile Systems Center and held senior posts at the National Reconnaissance Office and the Air Force Research Laboratory.

The Space Force last year planned to send to Capitol Hill a list of recommendations for how to accelerate acquisitions but the proposal had to be pulled back because it was not approved by the White House. Congressional committees want to see a new set of recommendations but also a plan for standing up a Senate-confirmed space acquisition executive office in the Department of the Air Force.

**Read more.**

## **ARP and NPS News**

### **Registration is open for the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Acquisition Research Symposium**

This year's event will be held May 11-13, 2021 as a live webinar presented through Zoom for Government. Keynote speakers are Ms. Stacy Cummings, Acting Undersecretary of Defense for

Acquisition and Sustainment, Vice Admiral Jon A. Hill, USN, Director of Missile Defense Agency, and Mr. Frederick J. (Jay) Stefany, Acting Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition. Seats are limited. Register today!

### **[Acquisition Data Analytics for Supply Chain Cybersecurity](#)**

Randy Maule, Naval Postgraduate School

Cybersecurity is a national priority, but the analysis required for acquisition personnel to objectively assess the integrity of the supply chain for cyber compromise is highly complex. This ARP-sponsored report presents a process for supply chain data analytics for acquisition decision makers, addressing data collection, assessment, and reporting.

### **[The Profession of Acquisition](#)**

Dr. Robert F. Mortlock, Army AT&L

Elements of a profession include accredited education, the acquisition of specialized skills, certification, licensure, continuous professional development, a certified governing society and a code of ethics. Acquisition (specifically program management) is not considered a profession in the eyes of most outside the acquisition workforce, as is evident in senior leaders' lack of trust and respect for acquisition professionals. In this article, Mortlock (ARP's Principal Investigator) proposes a major upgrade in the standards of conduct for the acquisition profession, in line with one of the key principles of recognition as a profession in society. This article focuses specifically on the certification requirements for the program management career field—both civilian and military, as with DAWIA.

## **[Acquisition and Innovation](#)**

### **[DoD top brass worried about supply chain amidst heavy spending, fewer prime contracts](#)**

Tom Temin, Federal News Network

### **[Exiger Appoints Hon. Ellen Lord as Advisory Board Chairwoman](#)**

William McCormick, ExecutiveGov

### **[DUNS Not “Done” Until Spring 2022](#)**

Nicole Pottroff, SmallGovCon

### **[Tech Groups Push TMF Repay Changes to Speed New Spending](#)**

John Curran, MeriTalk

### **[F-35 Procurement Could Be Swayed by Robo-Jets](#)**

Jon Harper, National Defense

### **[Commentary: Want an Agile Pentagon? Don't Go Chasing 'Waterfalls'](#)**

Chris Dougherty, Defense One

### **[Air Force Seeks White Papers for Potential \\$975M Capabilities for Cyber Advancement BAA](#)**

Jane Edwards, GovCon Wire

## **On a lighter note**

### **[A Song about 10 USC 2373](#)**

Strategic Institute

## **Education**

### **[Space Force JROTC to Get First Units Starting This Fall](#)**

Tobias Naegele, Air Force Magazine

### **[Commentary: Why Space Force Needs A War College Just Like Everyone Else — And Why It Should Be Different](#)**

Jonty Kaskku-Jason, War on the Rocks

## **Research**

### **[The 2020s Tri-Service Modernization Crunch](#)**

Mackenzie Eaglen with Hallie Coyne, American Enterprise Institute

### **[Trusted Partners: Human-Machine Teaming and the Future of Military AI](#)**

Margarita Konaev, Tina Huang, and Husanjot Chahal | Center for Security and Emerging Technology

### **[VA Acquisition Management: Comprehensive Supply Chain Management Strategy Key to Address Existing Challenges](#)**

U.S. Government Accountability Office

## **Congress**

### **[Pentagon policy nominee Colin Kahl survives Senate committee vote](#)**

Joe Gould, Defense News

### **[Washington's battle over nuclear weapons budget already underway](#)**

Joe Gould, Defense News

### **[Watch: Subcommittee on Readiness Hearing: "Investing in an Organic Industrial Base to Support Service Modernization Plans"](#)**

House Armed Services Committee

## **Defense and Federal Government**

### **[Hypersonic Research Funding Skyrockets as DOD Looks to Push Capability to the Field](#)**

John A. Tirpak, Air Force Magazine

### **[GAO to review Space Command headquarters decision](#)**

Nathan Strout, C4ISRNET

### [Pentagon modernization in for 'Terrible '20s,' report warns](#)

Aaron Mehta, Defense News

### [DoD Cloud Exchange Keynote: Navy's transformation to modern service delivery](#)

Jared Serbu, Federal News Network

### [Zumwalt Destroyer Will Control Unmanned Ships, Aircraft in Upcoming Fleet Battle Problem](#)

Megan Eckstein, USNI News

### [Deputy Defense Secretary Sees Challenges, Opportunities for DOD](#)

Jim Garamone, DOD News

## [Acquisition Tips and Tools, with Larry Asch](#)

### **Post-Award: The Forgotten Phase of Acquisition?**

In last week's article I touched on the need to improve Contract Administration, or those activities performed after a contract is awarded. The Post-Award activities cover all actions from the time the contract is awarded and is an important part of the procurement process that assures the customer receives delivery on time and within cost. The extent of oversight required for Post-Award activities varies from contract to contract. It can range from the minimum acceptance of a monthly report to delivery and payment to the contractor or extensive involvement by Program Office, Contracting Officer, and Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) throughout the contract period of performance. In my experience the larger programs, e.g., ACAT I, are staffed with experienced Post-Award personnel based on the nature of the work, the type of contract, and level of the program interest.

I found a great article by Dr. Steve Kelman, "[Talking with a procurement icon about post-award contract management](#)," in which he interviewed Ms. Deidre Lee in 2016. Excerpts of article below (some updates added):

"Deidre (Dee) Lee entered the government in 1978 as a GS-4 contract specialist buying supplies at the U.S. military base in Okinawa. From there she rose up through the ranks, moving to NASA Johnson Space Center and becoming the senior procurement official at NASA. She succeeded me as OFPP administrator (she was my choice for the job, and I was happy to see this go to a career civil servant), and from there she went back to the Defense Department as Director DPAP. Dee also had senior positions at the General Services Administration, Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency, and Chair of the Section 809 Panel."

"The main question I asked her was the differences in the behavior of government organizations she saw as being in the top 25 percent in terms of post-award management skills versus those in the bottom 25 percent. Her answer was fascinating: The key job in contract management is to monitor performance in terms of what the contract is trying to accomplish, The top 25 percent understand what they've trying to accomplish, and that's what they pay attention to. They look at what really matters, and they evaluate that. The bottom 25 percent track inputs, such as whether you've submitted monthly reports to the government."

"The top 25 percent look at things that really matter, and evaluate that, they recognize that it's more important that you deliver the service on time than that you submit reports on time. The bottom 25 percent have no idea whether they're getting a result. So they focus on nits, which are easier to measure but aren't real performance drivers."

"Often the origin of the problems for contract management is that the government didn't really know or describe what they wanted in the original RFP, so in the contract they measure things that are easy to measure, like submitting a report or measuring the number of Corrective Action Reports. If the contract is poorly written or doesn't solve the mission problem, the bottom 25 percent will just stick to doggedly administering the contract as written."

We could not say it any better than Ms. Lee, and thanks Dr. Kelman for a great article and interview. In my career I never knew who the OFPP Administrators were or cared much of what they were saying as it was mostly buzzwords. I waited until it affected me and my team at the working level. But we all knew Dee Lee because she was one of us, having come up through the ranks, and always provided acquisition policy we could relate to through bold and effective guidance. Ms. Lee is the epitome of an acquisition icon and has the whole package—she is a great leader and a nice person (I had the pleasure of working for her on the Section 809 Panel). We would also like to thank her for the influence and contributions she has provided us all during Women's History Month.

Some recommendations:

- More leadership attention on effective Post-Award management.
- No one-size-fits-all CORs. The [DoDI 5000.72](#) is on the right track with DoD's standards for COR certifications: with Type A, B, or C work efforts. (1) Type A: Fixed-price requirements without incentives, low performance risk; (2) Type B: Other than fixed-price requirements without incentives, low performance risk; (3) Type C: Unique contract requirements that necessitate a professional license, higher education, or specialized training beyond the Type B requirements.
- We need to ensure that the concepts in DoDI 5000.72 are leveraged and train the workforce on how to effectively manage Post-Award activities and assign the right support based on the contract complexity.
- Increase that top 25 percent to make it the norm to understand what they're trying to accomplish and what to pay attention to. Look at what really matters and recognize that "it is more important that you deliver the service on time than that you submit reports on time."
- Let us hold management accountable for the bottom 25 percent.